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ABSTRACT

The existential Gestalt approach to facilitating the human growth process is discussed, from somewhat different vantage points, in these papers. Two seek to elaborate the basic principles and facilitating "techniques" of Gestalt therapy, while maintaining that one can truly understand only by experiencing. The use of Focus Groups, in which a focal topic is selected because of the group conductor's interest and belief in the growth-facilitating potential of the topic, in this instance, art is discussed. Results suggest that, with some qualifications, this was a worthwile Focus Group. The review of personal research on growth groups shows this approach to effectively facilitate the self-actualization of "normal," growth-seeking persons. In the final paper, the rationale underlying Fritz Perls' Gestalt dreamwork is explained, and its goal, common to Focus and growth groups as well as individual Gestalt counseling, is stated: more whole, fully integrated persons who stand on their own 2 feet and take full responsibility for themselves and their lives. (TL)

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PLAYING GAMES WITH GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

APA Washington, D.C. September 1971

James F. Guinan Bowling Green State University

The first rule of every game is that you have to take it very seriously, and pretend that it is not a game at all. An example, is this paper which you are about to read. I have already received four requests for reprints, two letters of request from the convention Public Information Officer, and an offer to publish (in some obscure journal) this very paper. And I haven't yet even decided what I'm going to say.

Now, everyone knows (and you readers must know best of all or you wouldn't be reading this) that professional and scientific contributions are matters to be taken very seriously. To act as though an official program at an APA Convention to which hundreds of important professional and scientific persons come thousands of miles might really be just another absurd game would be a violation of a rule we all believe in and live by. Right? Just because we all come to the same place, wear the appropriate clothes, interact with the appropriate people, go to the appropriate meetings, and simultaneously behave in the appropriate manner, is no reason to suggest that we are playing a game (in which people go to a playing field, don their uniforms, take their positions, and then follow the rules).

Is it?

I suppose that before I get too far into this thing I had better define my terms and that stuff. It is a well known rule that any scholarly

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or scientific paper begins with an adequate definition of all the terms. Penalty for violating that rule is loss of publication; if frequently violated, one can even be thrown out of the game (publishing game, that is). Thus, I better tell you what I mean by what I mean.

It seems to me that the nature of human games is that they are behaviors that are committed in and of themselves with no meaning or purpose external to their being committed. This is to say that there are behaviors committed for the sake of committing those behaviors. For example, I ask why does the man want to move an odd-shaped ball over an imaginary line? You answer, because that is a touchdown. I ask why does he want points, you say so he will win the game, I ask so what? And eventually you say that's just the way they play the game, and <u>if you're going to play the game, then you have to follow the rules</u>. Should I then reply that the rules don't make any sense, ??????

A rule is a describable behavior that is committed in a given set of circumstances. I carry a football, you tackle me, and I hit you with a bat. Foul. The rule says what I am to do when tackled. When I break the rule, punishment follows. As I follow the rule, then I am playing a good game.

I am being aware as I compose this that I am repeatedly saying to myself "How can I say this in such a way that the reader will know exactly what I mean?" It is as though there is a rule about writing something that I must pay more attention to what you will think I am saying than to what I want to say. And if I break that rule, something bad will happen. Hmmmmmm. Like somehow <u>I</u> am totally responsible for whether or not you understand me. Like if you don't understand, it has to be because I'm doing something wrong. I wonder who makes all these rules anyway.

Let me digress back to talking about games. I hope you're a little confused (as many are) as to whether I'm talking about "real games" like football, or tennis, or "those other kinds of games" like Eric Berne wrote books about. The fact of the matter is that I don't differentiate. From where I look out upon human behavior, I notice people attributing value and power to behaviors that seem to be pretty absurd. Like does it really make any difference whether the margins on this paper are 1¼ inches? (I recently had a manuscript rejected because of the typing) Does it really make any difference if a department decides to add three courses or drop two? Does it really make any difference whether or not you're reading this paper to pass the time, or to impress your colleagues? I agree, of course that it does. And add only that it is about the same difference that it makes whether or not a quarterback calls for an end-run or a deep-pass play. It only affects the outcome of the game.

Games are behaviors created by man (oops; Now with Women's Lib, I've got to remember to say, "created by persons", not "man"). And I think that this is an important rule in determining what is and what is not a game. That I eat is no game. How, when, where, and with whom I eat are products of my own choices and thereby determined by whatever rules I follow. Thus what begins as a very natural and/or reasonable behavior may take upon itself expectations or rules and then become a game. Running is a very natural behavior. Running a race is a behavior created by man. Being pleasant to friends is natural. Being nice because I have to is a man-made rule.

Let me repeat what I've just said. Games are behaviors committed for their own sake. Games are behaviors governed by rules. The rules of games are creations of man.

The following announcement suddenly appeared upon a number of bulletin boards around campus: and in the student newspaper:

GAMES PEOPLE PLAY GROUP
Wednesdays 1 to 3 pm

A weekly group experience that focuses upon the games, maneuvers, and manipulations that we get into and out of in our interpersonal relationships. Interested persons call Jim Guinan, Counseling Center.

The following Wednesday at about ten after three, I entered our group room, found twelve others there, and something about like the following transpired.

I: (having entered, seated myself, and looking around) Geez, I heard a lot of voices in here, and when I came in everything got silent. It's almost like there's a rule in here about who can talk.

Silence.

Participant: Are you the Leader:

I: It seems that there is some kind of rule about finding out about a person's role before the person is found.

Silence.

Participant: I mean, are you running this group?

I. Hmmmmm, Well, if I am the run ner, then you must be a run nee.

Laughter.

Silence.

Participant: I think the game has started.

Laughter.

Participant: Are we supposed to introduce ourselves?

I: You are looking at me, and I hear you asking a question.

Participant: Well, yeah .....Does anybody else here....Does everybody know everybody?

Participant: He won't answer your questions...I've been in groups with him before.....

Laughter.

Participant: I'm Joe

Participant: I'm Chris

Participant: I'm Mary

Participant: I'm Jack

I: It looks to me like there's some kind of rule that each one of us in proper turn is supposed to say our name out loud.

Laughter.

Silence.

I: Now I'm thinking that every time I say something about what I'm thinking or perceiving, a silence follows. I wonder if there's a rule in there someplace. Oh, I bet there's a rule, that everytime I mention a rule, nobody can respond.

Participant: I think you're playing a game.

I: Terrific. Tell me some more about my game. Like what rules am I following, and how I'm doing what.

Participant: Well, you're trying to get us to know what games we're playing.

I: Oh, the old "trying-to-get-you-to-know-what-game-you're-playing game" (laughter) Well tell me some more, Like when do I win. Or how do I lose.

Participant: Isn't everything a game?

I: You're asking me a question.

Participant: Oh. Is there something wrong with asking questions?

I: That's another question.

Participant. Well, can I ask questions?

I: You just did.

Laughter.

Participant: He may be playing a game by asking questions, but aren't you

just playing a game by not answering them.?

I: Right now I'm asking myself, "If I answer that question then I will be playing a different game that when I didn't answer all the others? I guess that's the trouble with questions. They're so contagious. They only lead to more questions, never to anything else.

Participant: I think we're making a rule now that nobody can ask questions.

I: I think the "Games people play" group has just started.

Laughter.

And so it goes. I believe I mentioned above that one of the first rules that seems to develop in human interaction games is that they may not be treated like games. Namely, there is a rule against playing games. I find this to be particularly true amongst psychologists, and even more frequently true of those psychologists who have become involved in developing group procedures. "It is alright to accuse others of playing games, but running groups is pure". Now I too am impressed by such esoteria as "Honesty," intimacy," "relatedness," and "caring." I also am impressed by good old fashion fun. And in my experience, we are all too prone to give up one kind of rule (let's say manipulativeness, for example). That's only another form of "innovation without change". We are no less bound, no less driven, and not at all more free.

My first intention in offering the "Games" group was to have some fun. It is gratifying as well as growth-facilitating to laugh at oneself. And so most of what I do during such a group is comment upon the process as I see it, join in the absurdities that develop, and even foster whenever possible, some games and rules that we frequently follow in our every day lives. This is simply an extension of the Gestalt Notion, that we increase our awareness of ourselves and our behavior by conscious-

ly committing what we are already doing. Specific "fostered" or directed games usually flow out of the processes already happening. For example, if in the group described above, a person or persons repeatedly and consistently only asked questions, I would play "the old you-can-only-ask-a-question game", have participants pick partners, and take turns being able to only ask questions, then explore the effects of such a game on the relationship. Similarly, as I or someone in the group begins to notice that their own or another's behavior seems to be being governed by some rule or set of rules, we make a game out of it, and then practice.

Frequently it happens that after we have met for a few sessions, participants come into a session with a particular "game" they wish to explore or learn about. Some of the favorites that students at Bowling Green get into have to do with their relationships with their parents ("the old screw-your-folks-while-you're-still-dependent-upon-them game") their professors ("the old tell-'em only-what-He-wants-to-hear game") and of course their friends and acquaintenances (the old NICETY game") We spend a few minutes--sometimes longer--exploring the situations and intricacies of such a game and then go ahead and play it. For example, participant brings up an issue he is presently engaged in with a roommate, and after discussion it appears that neither the participant or the roommate are really talking to one another; they're simply carrying on social amenities. I suggest to the participant that he pick a partner, pretend the partner is his roommate, and play "the old nicety game. That is, talk to the roommate about anything at all, only make sure that there is an absolutely rigid rule that anything said must be "NICE".

Sometimes we even play a group game. Like, "for the next ten minutes, everybody has to be spontaneous, honest and open." The fun of

such games--which really is only acting out consciously that which we are already doing lies in becoming aware of some of our own absurdities. The value lies in becoming aware of how many choices we really have in our lives, and how by projecting artificial rules onto our own behavior, we cost ourselves our own freedom. Like what happened in one session went something like:

Participant: You know, ever since I've been coming to this group, I've only been getting more confused. Like I'm beginning to wonder if my whole life isn't just one phony game after another.

Participant: Yeah, I know what you mean. Like anything can be a game. Just anything at all.

I: Well, you know who makes the rules.

Participant: You mean who follows the rules.

Participant: Is there a difference?

Right at this moment I find myself wondering if I am responsible for your (the reader's) "unfinished business" concerning your learning about Games Groups. Almost like there is some kind of a rule that I can't stop here.

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CONTRIBUTIONS OF GESTALT THEORY TO INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING

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A.P.G.A.

Atlantic City, N. J.

April, 1971

I am aware that I am thinking that the real difficulty I will have in achieving communication in this paper is the range of sophistication of you, the reader. My suspicion is that some of you are here because you've heard weird rumors about Gestalt Therapy and are here only to listen for weirdness: some of you probably have an honest professional curiosity aroused by hearsay, and expect to learn some elementary principles of Gestalt Theory and how you may utilize them in your work back home, some of you are probably "experts" who brag about "knowing Fritz" and are here to make sure that you are more Gestalt than I: the larger proportion of you are probably here because you have sensed through an ambiguous combination of gossip, hearsay, occasional reading, that Gestalt has something to offer, and you'd like to get it.

I rather enjoyed composing the above paragraph because I knew this one was to follow. I do not intend to live up to any of your expectations.

I am aware that you will not be reading what I write. Rather, you will be busy--in the presence of this program, or as you read this--fulfilling your own expectations. Knowing that rather frees me, for you have probably already made up your mind about what counseling is all about and how it works and how it doesn't work. What I say here will do one of the following:

If you're pretty much convinced that you know what you're doing as a counselor and it's not Gestalt, your suspicions will be confirmed

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regardless of what I may say.

If you think that Gestalt is really going to help you be a more effective counselor, you're probably right.

If you claim to be open-minded and flexible, and prepared to listen, you will only leave confused.

I AM NOT ALIVE TO LIVE UP TO YOUR EXPECTATIONS
YOU ARE NOT ALIVE TO LIVE UP TO MINE
YOU ARE YOU AND I AM I
IF WE MEET, IT IS BEAUTIFUL
IF NOT, IT CAN'T BE HELPED
(Fritz Perls)

So I allow myself to be called a gestalt therapist; what in the world does that mean (actually, in the directory I'm only listed as "predominantly Gestalt")? It means first of all that I experience a good deal of conflict in even approaching the task of theorizing--especially if theorizing means translating my experience into the written word in a paper like this. A Paradox. There is simply no way it can be done.

My experience is complete. It is physical. It is emotional. It is intellectual. It is and it is not verbal. The very structure of the medium through which you and I are now in contact with each other excludes the physical, narrows and limits the emotional, isolates the intellectual, and must remain verbal. Thus there exists no way that you will know my Gestalt Experience by responding to the stimulus of whatever is on this paper. I am putting you on to even attempt it.

I am finding as I compose this that a lot of memories are entering my consciousness. When I stop typing and focus upon what I am remembering--most of them are occasions when I have been in my office with an individual client--Gestalt Theory makes a lot of sense to me. I am together with it. When I

stop being with me and begin to write, I find myself trying to figure out what I'm going to say, who will be listening (reading), and nothing makes sense to me at all--especially Gestalt Theory.

Everything you will ever need to know about Gestalt Theory and its application is contained in the preceding paragraph.

I am remembering this: The other day, a young fellow walked into the Counseling Center and said to the secretary, "Can I talk to somebody?" It was my "open office hours" so she sent him on in.

Cl: Is it okay if I come in?

I: You're asking me a question.

Cl: What? .... Oh .... Uhh. Are you Dr. Guinan?

I: I am Jim Guinan

(I extended a hand, noticed a cold and clingy hand touching, not grasping, my own, sat down again, and began to focus upon what I was noticing about him. He looked around hesitantly, and sort of slithered into a chair, looked briefly at me, turned his eyes away, waited, glimpsed back at me, looked downward, spoke in a voice that seemed high-pitched and unmatching the rest of his appearance).

Cl: Well, am I suppose to just start talking?
(I was aware of a voice within me saying, "Damn questions".

Cl: Uhhhh....D o you want me to tell you what my problem is?

(I was aware of his posture, which was sitting, bent almost double, leaning forward)

I: Be aware of the position of your body.

Cl: Huh? Oh.. (Straightening up) I always sit like this.

I: I didn't ask you to change, I asked you to be aware.

Cl: What does that mean?

I: Assume that position again. Yeah, like that. Say what it feels like.

Cl: Like I'm all bent up. Like I'm reaching or something.

I: Exaggerate the position. Push it. What's that like?

Cl: Like I'm really trying....Like I'm really reaching; I'm afraid if I reach out, I'll fall.

I: Fall.

Cl: Huh?

I: Reach out and see what happens. If you fall, fall.

Cl: (extending his arms toward me reaches out, topples off chair onto his hands and knees) Now what?

I: What do you want?

Cl: (on hands and knees, looking at floor) I want to get up.

I: Who's stopping you.

Cl: Uhhh. Well....(suddenly stands and sits down on the chair) You know, I don't know whether we're playing some kind of silly game or <u>really</u> talking about my problem.

I: Both.

Cl: (laughing) Yeah.

All the things that can be truthfully said about Gestalt Therapy in a paper like this are so trite that I smile as I consider them. Things like:

Everything that needs to be known about a client, everything about his "problem", what he wants from you, how he needs to grow, what he needs to work on is immediately apparent. All you as counselor have to do is stop trying to figure him out and see, listen, smell, touch, and sense, and you'll be right there with him.

Any experience that your clients need to deal with will take place <u>in your office.</u>

Any feelings, attitudes, difficulties, or areas that your clients need to work on will be expressed as soon as you allow them to be expressed. If your people aren't growing fast enough for you, it is you that need to change.

There are two times in a person's life that never need to be dealt with to effect therapeutic change--The past and the future.

By being aware of the present, I am able to change the present. Awareness of the present is the beginning and focus of therapeutic change, personal growth, and self development. It is impossible to put too much emphasis upon "Awareness of the now."

Right now, I am being aware of my penchant for preaching. I am preaching at you; and I am thinking I don't want to do that. I won't.

It's the second interview. Alice had come in the week before, started to complain about something or other, and spent most of the hour crying--sometimes tearfully, sometimes manipulatively--. I am aware as she enters that I like her being here.

Cl: Hi.

I: Howdy. You're looking pretty.

Cl: Oh, Thanks

Pause

Cl: There you go again. Staring at me. Geez, you make me nervous the way you look.

Pause

Cl: I guess I've been feeling better since last week. Geez, does everybody cry that much in here?

Pause

Cl: Y'know, I don't know what I'm supposed to say. I'm trying. Like I told you, I don't know what I should do. It's like, well, you just can't do what you want to.

I: I can't?

Cl: Well, you know, you.....

I: I do? (interrupting)

Cl: You can't just go around telling people what you think.

I: I can't?

Cl: Well, I mean I can't...well, you know,,,,well, what do you think I should do.

I: I'd like to tell you what my rules are. All you have to do is change your language.

Cl: My language?

I: Yeah, I'm noticing that you got bad language. While we're together at least, I'll enforce my rules. And they are:

You're not supposed to say "supposed to" (and you gotta stop saying "got to")
You should never say "should"
You can't say "can't"
And no "buts"

Cl: Well what should I say?

I: You said, "should".

Cl: Oh,,, but

I: (interrupting) You said "but"

Cl: Look, I can't Just....

I: You said "can't"
I told you that when we're together, I'll enforce them. I suggest that you follow the same rules when we're not together. Expecially when you're talking to yourself.

Pause

Cl: Well, what do you think?

I: and my last rule is that I don't answer questions.

Cl: If you're not going to answer my questions, then how do you expect to help me?

I: That's a question.

Cl: Well, holy cow, Do you mean....I mean, Well...
But why..opps. (laughing) Then I can't say anything.

I· Say what you're feeling.

Cl: Right now I'm confused.

I: Be your confusion. Say what it's saying to you.

Pause

Cl: I don't want to cry again.

I Be aware of how you are stopping yourself.

CL: I... I... Oh, shit. It's just not worth it. (crying)

I: What's "it"?

Cl: What?

I: You said, "It's not worth it". What does the "it" refer to?

Cl: Me.....(Crying)

I: Say, "I'm not worth it"

Cl: I'm not worth it

I: Again

Cl: I'm not worth it. I'm not.... (stops crying) That's not true. I am worth it.

I rather think that the Behaviorists are right when they say that "talking never helped anyone". Put another way, it goes, "verbal therapy does not work". If the statement is valid, it becomes necessary for us counselors to wonder just what in the world we are doing in our offices all day. That's a pretty good thing to wonder about. It leads to a number of interesting questions. (I do allow questions when dealing with things "professional or scientific"; I just think they don't belong in personal relationships--especially therapeutic

relationships). Questions like: Then how come my clients get better, and sometimes so soon? Questions like: If it's not talking that helps, then what does? Questions like: How is it then, that I can point to some very meaningful ways that I have personally experienced myself changing, and such changes are always related to and associated with persons I have known?

I am quite impressed with the fact that most people I know remember almost nothing from their introductory course in psychology. However, these same people seem able to remember with amazing frequency that "Gestalt" has got something to do with perception, and that the terms "figure and ground" have got something to do with it. Such selective remembering tempt one to offer a psychoanalytic explanation about it must be valid because it is remembered. Or better yet, the whole figure-ground notion is probably one of those things that we each know at a not so conscious level (ground) and the learning of it only brought into figure what we already knew.

No wonder Fritz called psychological theory "elephant shit--the biggest kind of all".

Gestalt is not anti-intellectual; rather, Gestalt recognizes that cognitive functioning is only one aspect of the configuration that is human personality. When thinking becomes separated from feeling, then the gestalten is incomplete and the person becomes aware of feeling "untogether" or as though he has a "problem". The "problem" is not an historical event. The "problem" is not a traumatic early childhood experience, or a broken home, or a situational crisis. The "problem" is that the person is not together; is not integrated, and the "dis-integratedness" is blocking the person from functioning in a desired manner. Talking about the problem does not put the person back together again. Talking <u>Per se</u> does nothing. What does facilitate change is integration. And

what facilitates integration is the experiencing of that which is dis-integrated. As I allow myself to experience and own those aspects of my person which I am dis-integrating from myself, as I allow the "ground" of my present to mold with the figure of my present, then I am together with my self. Then I function as I choose. Then I feel alive and healthy.

The emphasis of what I am saying here is upon the experiencing of feelings. "Experiencing feelings" is usually categorically opposite from "talking about feelings". Thus, while talking about what I feel, won't help, feeling what I feel, puts me in charge, and allows a new choice to be made. This is an extremely important point, and it is a point that many counselors get a little uncomfortable with. If true--and I think it is, then probably the most frequent mistake that counselors make is when they ask their client to talk about what they feel.

If the client says, "I'm angry and the counselor says, "Talk about your anger"; the client and counselor have neatly avoided an opportunity for growth.

If the client says, "I'm sad", and the counselor replies (with much empathy) "Tell me about the things that make you sad", the counselor has avoided dealing with the client's feelings.

If the client speaks about loneliness, and the counselor responds by doing nothing more than speaking about his own loneliness, then counselor and client have only colluded to prove that nobody can change.

What is the alternative? Rogers talks about therapy as a process. Namely, one feeling elicits another which results in a new conflict associated with new feelings, and on it goes. Gestalt focuses upon new configurations which have continuously newly-produced figure and ground. Living involves allowing the process to continue to completion. Thus, by <u>expressing</u> what is felt, a new configuration will emerge, which allows for a new expression, which then completes itself. To cut off the process only results in new

"unfinished business", and to avoid an expression of feelings prevents the completion and stops the person from growth.

(I am aware of a "stuckness" with Joan. I am aware that I am thinking that she needs to get angry, and I am ware that she always seems to get coy and seductive when I am sensing that she's feeling anger.)

Cl: Are you going to sleep? Oh, I forgot, no questions...You look like you're going to sleep.

I: I'm feeling like we're stuck. I'm getting bored, and it doesn't seem like anything is happening. I'd be better off sleeping.

Cl: Don't let me disturb you, after all, I only came here for help. Aren't you going to help me?

I: Question.

Cl: This is some kind of a game you're playing with me. Well, I don't know what good this all is doing me anyway.

I: Your voice sounds angry. Your face looks like you're pleading with me.

Cl: Don't you think I have a right to be angry?

I: Question.

Cl: Alright, so I'm angry--So what?

I: Express it.

Cl: How? (glaring)

I: Question.

Cl: Ohhhhhh! (Jumps up and shoves me--hesitantly--then looks sweetly seductive. I shove her back against a wall. She lunges at me and we fall to the floor struggling. I am suddenly aware that it's a phony fight, and say, "This is the sexiest fight I've ever been in". Just as suddenly, I am aware that the fight is no longer phoney. In a few minutes, I quit, exhausted.

Cl: I never knew I could get so angry. I never knew I could hate. But when you said that--about it being sexy--I just--well, I...I guess I always had my sex to fall back on with men, and I,,,well...

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Self-Discovery Through Art: A Group Experience

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Background

The early history of the Counseling Center at Bowling Green State University becoming a Growth Center is reported by Foulds & Guinan (1969 & 1970.) Among the recommendations and programs described as broadening the offerings of a Growth Center are Focus Groups.

The thinking behind offering Focus Groups came out of the notion that there are many persons in the University community who view the traditional services offered by the Counseling Center as unrelated to their needs. Even some of the more recent group approaches are seen as unattractive to many. By offering a group experience with a focal theme (such as a Yoga Workshop, Dream Seminar, Games People Play, etc.), it was thought that a wider segment of the population would be attracted to learning about particular topics on areas of their existence.

The selection of a topic for a Focus Group is generally based on interest and belief. The group experience is most likely to be successful when the person conducting the group is interested in and believes in the growth facilitating potential of the topic.

Such an interest and belief in the use of art existed in the author and was inspired into action by an article by Denny (1969).

This writer conducted a Self-Discovery Through Art group during the middle quarter of the academic year. First, he contacted members of the University's Art Department to find someone interested in collaborating in the project. Then, some tentative plans were formulated.

Finding a suitable room was impossible. Ideally, a spacious room with work tables, storage space, a sink and water, and cleanable floors was sought. The group ended up meeting in a relatively small (12' x 24') group room with a carpeted floor in the Counseling Center. To protect the carpet, a room-sized tar-

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paulin was purchased.

The group met for two afternoon hours a week for six weeks of the quarter. This allowed the first two weeks of the quarter for publicity. A reporter from the school newspaper was invited to write a story about it and a ditto was prepared describing the what, when, and where of the group. Interested participants, regardless of recognized artistic talent, were invited to attend and wear old clothes.

The first session convened with twelve students, the writer, and Mrs. Mary Wolfe from the art faculty. After some initial discussion/lecturing about this not being an experience to teach/learn art technique, that what is sought are personally meaningful expressions, that there is no such thing as a "right" or "wrong," "good" or "bad" production, and some encouragement to "flow with the experience," plastic buckets, wheat paste, water, and tempera colors were provided to begin mixing some finger paint.

It was believed (and confirmed) that finger paint was a good beginning medium to use. This medium encourages slugginess, non-evaluation, lack of planning, the use of free-flowing bodily movements, and regression. After several individual productions, two or more person creations were encouraged. What gradually evolved was that everyone used the finger paint medium to relate to and be in contact with each other, both on paper and on each other. The net result was a fun, freeing, messy, encouraging experience.

The medium employed in the following session was continuous line drawings. With paper and crayon or felt tipped pens, the participants were instructed to draw other persons in the group with one continuous line. Variations to this activity include drawing more than one person, drawing a continuous line human figure while blindfolded, and coloring in the outlines drawn.

As the members completed their drawings, they were encouraged to discuss them

with the person (s) they drew. This was done to provide an experience in sharing perceptions of one another. For example, the shapes and colors drawn frequently had some significance to the way the creator viewed the subject.

The next week provided two contrasting experiences. First, people were instructed to draw a series of criss-crossing lines across the length and width of the paper. Then they colored in the resulting boxes with crayon. This gave them an experience of carefully controlled coloring, intentional color selection and balancing, and an opportunity to completely cover up the piece of paper. In contrast to this a series of musical selections were played and, on large sheets of paper, each person spontaneously selected colors and recorded their responses to the beat and/or mood of the music.

The next meeting occurred just before Valentine's Day and everyone agreed that it would be fun to make Valentine's cards using typing paper and felt-tip pens. Each person made a personalized card for every other person, including one for themselves, and each described the meaning of the card as it applied to the recipient.

The fifth meeting revolved around "self portraits." In order to minimize structure and encourage as wide a variety and range of productions as possible, the members were encouraged to spend a few minutes in self-contemplation. It was suggested that they spend about ten minutes focusing on themselves, tuning in on how they felt about their "self," how they experienced their "self" in relation to their world, etc. Additionally, they were encouraged to have fantasies, imagine colors, shapes, sizes, etc., that somehow fit their experience of "self." When they felt filled-up with this experience of "self," they were instructed to create as many and varied pictures as they wanted that portrayed their "self."

The final meeting incorporated the use of acrylic paints and the production of a group painting.

These then were the activities employed in conducting this group. The writer believes that it will be helpful to others interested in conducting such a group to offer some evaluative comments about the experience.

Evaluative Comments

There were two main things that, to the writer, seemed to interfere with this group experience being as good as it might have been.

The first of these, as mentioned previously, was the meeting room. The room in which the group met was too small so that the participants were constantly in each others' way. There were no work tables, no place to store things, no clean-up facilities, and care had to be constantly exercised to avoid messing up the room.

The second area of difficulty could probably have been dealt with more effectively. The writer frequently experienced frustration at the conclusion of sessions over the small amount of interactions among the participants. Compared to other group experiences the author has conducted, there was relatively little self-disclosure, working with self, or personally meaningful interactions in this group. There seemed to be two related interferences to these kinds of growth-facilitating experiences.

The first of these seemed to be a problem of timing. Each person completed his production (s) at a different rate,; some sooner and some much later. This meant that there were rarely times when everyone was free at the same time to attend to or share with the others. It is believed that this could probably have been dealt with by imposing more time structure on the group, i.e., by setting time limits for the various production and setting time aside specifically for discussion. This potential remedy was not accomplished due to the second and related problem that the establishment or imposition of structure is a very discomforting experience for the writer.

On the positive side of this experience were the many delightfully creative production of the participants. Most of the persons were frankly pleased with and proud of what they were able to create.

There was also an admirable spirit of cooperation and sharing in that the participants were required to provide their own materials.

Also, despite the author's frustration, there were moments of genuine joy, fun, and meaningful sharing. For example, the initial finger-painting session was a good beginning and the exchange of Valentine's cards led to many worthwhile interactions. There were other times, too, which lead to the conclusion that this was and is a worthwhile Focus Group.

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A REVIEW OF PERSONAL RESEARCH ON EXPERIENTIAL-GESTALT GROWTH GROUPS

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I am a counseling psychologist in a university counseling center, co-director of AMARE: The Institute of Human Relatedness, a growth center in Bowling Green, Ohio, and director of AMARE of Boston. I am strongly committed to my own growth and to fostering growth in others, and much of my professional time is spent in providing opportunities for personal growth and learning through various kinds of group activities. I am also highly interested in the scientific study of the effects of growth group activities, and a portion of my professional time is committed to this endeavor. I believe that it is extremely important that professional persons in the human potential movement take responsibility for investigating the impact of their activities so that they may discover strengths and weaknesses in their programs, so that they may improve the quality of their professional services, and so that they may then share their findings and learning with others. This, I believe, is the kind of professional contribution that is particularly essential at this time in the "growth movement" when experimentation, innovation, and creativity are the usual.

I have advocated the growth center model (Foulds & Guinan, 1969) for the provision of counseling and psychological services in educational institutions. On the college or university campus, the growth center is a proactive agency that provides a wide variety of educative, developmental, and remedial services designed to foster increased levels of self-actualization and human effectiveness, expansion of human awareness and human experiencing, and maximum development of human potentials. This model is currently being implemented at Bowling Green State University (Foulds, 1971c; Foulds & Guinan, 1970), and the present paper is a review of research and evaluative programs some colleagues and I have conducted to assess the effectiveness of group approaches to fostering individual growth and personal learning. The present paper will be limited to the effects of two types of group activities, the weekly personal growth group and the marathon growth group, forms of experiential learning which focus on expanded awareness of self and environment, increased authenticity, and more effective interpersonal communication.

The Process of an Experiential-Gestalt Growth Group

Before communicating the results of my research in this particular area, I would like to describe, if only somewhat briefly, the kinds of experiences I refer to when I use the term "experiential-Gestalt growth group." This is important, for all growth groups or encounter groups do not provide the same set of experiences leading to identical results. Group leaders and/or facilitators provide differential stimuli for group members and initiate different forms of group process which may yield differential outcomes, and the process herein described is a specific form of group process facilitated by specific leaders whose orientation is experiential-Gestalt.

The experiential-Gestalt growth group (Foulds, 1971b) is a relatively unstructured group experience with emphasis on the exploration and expression of here-and-now feelings concerning self and other group members. The facilitator-

leader-teacher-person attempts to keep the focus of the group on what "is," on awareness of organismic experiencing and intrapersonal and interpersonal processes, and on awareness of ways in which we prevent ourselves from feeling, moving, and living more fully and honestly. Discussion of historical material (psychological archeology) is discouraged, and group members are encouraged to live as fully as possible in the present ongoing situation, to learn to stay in the "continuum of awareness," and to relate authentically in the now. The facilitator-leader-teacher-person attempts to create a psychological environment of safety and trust in which each person might feel increasingly free to risk being transparently real, to trust his feelings, to communicate his needs and preferences openly and honestly, to be more aware of his personal freedom and the responsibility associated with this, and to be more fully alive and more fully integrated. Participants are urged to "talk straight" at all times (with directness, clarity, and congruence), to become aware of and to "own" their manipulative behaviors (so that these may then change), and to discover ways in which their intended "helpfulness" (Helpful Henrys and Helpful Henriettas) sometimes inhibits growth and change in another person. They are also encouraged to become increasingly aware of internal sensations and the reflexive muscle movements associated with these (and also of the antagonistic muscle movements that prevent bodily movement and the release of inner tensions), to develop behavioral flexibility (to learn to respond behaviorally to feelings in a wide variety of ways so that the probability of releasing tension, excess energy, and excitement in an appropriate, nondestructive, and satisfying manner can be increased), and to develop closer contact with the external environment through sharpened sensory awareness. Group members are invited to remove their social masks, to reduce their phony game-playing, and to begin communicating openly, directly, and authentically. At appropriate times the group facilitator-leader-teacher-person uses a variety of techniqas including sensory awareness exercises, nonverbal exercises, Gestalt awareness training, psychodrama, guided fantasy, directed daydreams, and psychomotor experiences to help group members experience more fully in awareness (in the foreground) what had previously been in the background of unawareness. Special emphasis is placed on awareness of one's decision-making process, on the importance of choosing in awareness, and on accepting personal responsibility for one's choices.

Weekly Growth Groups

In an early study (Foulds, 1970), I investigated changes in scores on the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI; Shostrom, 1966), a measure of self-actualization (Maslow, 1962) following a personal growth group of nine weekly sessions. Subjects were 19 college students who were divided into two subgroups and met for a 4-hour period each week in the evening for nine weeks. The POI was administered before and after the group experience. An equal number of subjects were selected for a nontreatment group controlled for sex and pretest scores on the Inner Direction and Time Competence scales of the POI (all 150 items in the inventory). Experimental group mean scores changed in a positive direction following the growth group experience on all 12 POI scales, and statistically significant changes ($p < .05$) were observed on 8 of 12 scales (6 at the .001 level). Significant changes occurred on the POI scales that assess the following personality characteristics: (a) feelings or attitudes of personal freedom or independence and internal direction based upon inner motivations rather than upon external expectations and influences (Inner Direction); (b) flexibility in the application of values and reduced compulsivity and dogmatism as well as increased ability to situationally or existentially react without blind or rigid adherence to principles (Existentiality); (c) awareness of and sensitivity to one's own needs and feelings (Feeling Reactivity); (d) ability to express feelings in spontaneous action (Spontaneity); (e)

acceptance of self in spite of weaknesses and deficiencies (Self-Acceptance); (f) ability to transcend dichotomies and to see opposites in life as meaningfully related (Synergy); (g) ability to accept one's natural aggressiveness (Aggression); and (h) ability to develop intimate meaningful relationships with other human beings that are unencumbered by expectations and obligations (Capacity for Intimate Cpntact). No significant changes occurred in mean scores of the control group.

I later (Foulds, 1971d) conducted a further examination of the effects of an ongoing growth group on levels of self-actualization of college students. Fifteen students met for one 4½-hour period per week for eight weeks and completed the POI at the beginning of the first session and one week following the last session. An equal number of subjects were selected for a nontreatment group controlled for sex and pretest scores on the POI. Findings disclosed that all 12 POI mean scores of the experimental group changed in a positive direction and significant changes ($p < .05$) occurred on 8 of 12 scales (5 at the .001 level). These were the same eight scales that yielded significant positive changes in mean scores in the previous study (Foulds 1970). Since POI scale scores are unlikely to be inflated by the conscious or unconscious attempts of naive subjects to make a good impression (Foulds & Warehime, 1971a), are unrelated to social desirability responding (Foulds & Warehime, 1970; Warehime & Foulds, 1972), are inversely related to scores on the Repression-Sensitization scale of the MMPI (Foulds & Warehime, 1971b), and correlate with internal control of reinforcement on the Internal-External scale (Warehime & Foulds, 1971), these findings are especially meaningful. The nontreatment group demonstrated no significant changes.

In another study, I hypothesized that the degree of affect that college students attach to perceptions of themselves and others on semantic differential rating scales (positive self-description) would change significantly in a positive direction following a growth group experience of six weekly sessions of four hours each and then tested this hypothesis (Foulds, 1972). The experimental group consisted of 14 college students who completed the Affect Scale (Girona, 1969) at the beginning of the first group session and one week following the last session. Findings revealed significant positive changes in mean ratings of Myself ($p < .01$), Others ($p < .05$), and Myself plus Others ($p < .01$) for the experimental group. No significant changes occurred in the mean scores of a nontreatment group controlled for sex and desire to participate in a weekly growth group.

I have also investigated (Foulds, 1971a) the effects of a weekly growth group experience on generalized locus of control expectancies as measured by the Internal-External scale (I-E; Rotter, 1966). The control dimension distributes individuals along a continuum with regard to a generalized expectancy which relates to whether or not the individual possesses or lacks power over what happens to him and to the degree to which he accepts personal responsibility for his behavior and life experiences. The internally oriented individual perceives reinforcements to be contingent upon his own behavior and positive and/or negative events to be consequences of his own actions while the externally oriented individual perceives reinforcements to be unrelated to his own behavior and therefore beyond personal control and personal responsibility. An experimental group of 29 students were divided into two subgroups and met for one 4½-hour period per week in the evening for eight weeks. As predicted, locus of control expectancies were significantly altered ($p < .001$) in the direction of internality. No significant changes were found for a nontreatment group controlled for sex and pretest scores on the I-E scale.

Marathon Growth Groups

Since Bach (1966) and Stoller (1967) first introduced Marathon Group Dynamics, the use of marathon group experiences has been frequently publicized but infrequently studied. A marathon is a time-extended growth group experience that may meet for an entire weekend with breaks for sleeping or for a 20 to 30 hour continuous period of time. Bach (1966) has defined the marathon group as a group practicum in intimate, authentic, human interaction which facilitates in the participants a transition from self-defensive alienation and exploitative game-playing to transparency and psychological intimacy through genuine encounter. Following are the results of several marathon group studies that are part of our large scale research program designed to study the effects of personal growth groups.

We (Guinan & Foulds, 1970) have reported the results of an investigation of the effects of a 48-hour weekend marathon group on levels of self-actualization as measured by the POI. The experimental group consisted of 10 college students who completed the POI before and after the weekend marathon. Results revealed that significant positive changes ($p < .05$) occurred in mean scores on 7 of 12 POI scales (Inner Direction, Existentiality, Feeling Reactivity, Spontaneity, Self-Acceptance, and Capacity for Intimate Contact at the .01 level; Aggression at the .05 level) for the experimental group. There were no significant changes for a nontreatment control group.

We have also investigated the effects of a 24-hour marathon growth group on the degree of affect that individuals attach to perceptions of themselves and others (Foulds, Girona, & Guinan, 1970). Sixteen college students responded to semantic differential rating scales (Affect Scale) measuring attitudes toward self and others before and one week following the marathon group experience. An equal number of subjects controlled for sex, age, and desire to participate in a marathon group formed a nontreatment control group. Results disclosed significant positive changes in mean ratings of Myself ($p < .001$), Others ($p < .005$), and Myself plus Others ($p < .001$) for the experimental group. Of the 16 subjects, 14 ratings of Myself, 13 of Others, and 15 of Myself plus Others showed change in a positive direction on posttests. Changes in control group mean scores were nonsignificant.

Changes in generalized locus of control expectancies as measured by the I-E scale as a result of a 24-hour marathon group have also been studied (Foulds, Guinan, & Warehime, 1970a). The experimental group consisted of 15 college students who completed the I-E scale before and one week following a 24-hour marathon group. A nontreatment group controlled for sex, age, and desire to participate in a marathon group also completed the I-E scale two times, a week apart. Findings revealed that locus of control expectancies were significantly altered ($p < .01$) in the direction of increased internality. No significant changes were found in the nontreatment control group.

The effects of a marathon group on scores on the Dogmatism Scale (DS; Rokeach, 1960) have been investigated by my colleagues and I (Foulds, Guinan, & Warehime, 1970b). The DS consists of 40 items that measure individual differences in openness or closedness of belief systems. Rokeach suggests that a high score on the DS indicates a closed way of thinking, an authoritarian outlook on life, an intolerance toward those with opposing beliefs, and a sufferance with those with similar beliefs. Fifteen experimental subjects completed the DS before and one week following a 24-hour marathon growth group, and results indicated that a significant positive change ($p < .01$) occurred in the mean score of participants

in the direction of open beliefs. No significant changes were found for a non-treatment group controlled for sex, age, and desire to participate in a 24-hour marathon group.

Our first six month follow-up study (Foulds, Wright, & Guinan, 1970) was conducted to determine the self-reports of 15 college students who had participated in a 24-hour marathon group with regard to their perceptions of the value and impact of the group experience upon their lives. Six months following the marathon group each subject had an individual semi-structured personal interview with one of the researchers (JCW) who was unknown to the subjects, and these 30-45 minute interviews were tape-recorded for later analysis. The interviews were centered around 13 questions, and the interviewer encouraged as much free response as possible and then reflected these responses to encourage deeper self-exploration and to ensure more valid information. Findings revealed that the self-reports were extremely positive with regard to the perceived value of the group experience. The subjects saw the group as a highly valuable personal growth and learning experience, and they described specific overt behavior changes to demonstrate this growth and learning. The kinds of change reported by the subjects included increased awareness of and contact with inner feelings, greater spontaneity, a tendency to live more fully in the here-and-now, greater openness and honesty, increased feelings of self-confidence and trust in self and others, greater acceptance of self and others, and increased feelings of empathy for and identification with other human beings. All subjects reported positive changes in the ways they view and feel about themselves, in level of overall personal functioning, and in the quality of their interpersonal relationships.

Summary

The findings reported above support the proposition that the experiential-Gestalt growth group is an effective method for fostering the process of personal growth and experiential learning in relatively healthy, growth-seeking individuals. While the results herein reported come from studies of young college-age adults, it is my experience that similar kinds of changes seem to occur with participants of other ages, both older and younger.

The emerging gestalt containing both objective and subjective criteria regarding the effects of this form of group process indicates that participants seem to change in the following ways: (a) a tendency to live more fully in the here-and-now; (b) increased feelings of self-support and inner direction; (c) more open belief systems; (d) increased empathy for and broader identification with other human beings; (e) closer contact with one's own needs and feelings and greater spontaneity in expressing feelings; (f) increased self-acceptance; (g) a tendency to be synergistic and to see opposites in life as meaningfully related; (h) increased awareness and acceptance of one's natural aggressiveness; (i) ability to establish intimate relationships with other persons; (j) more positive views of self and others; (k) increased feelings of personal control and personal responsibility; (l) greater openness and honesty; (m) increased self-confidence; (n) greater trust in self and others; (o) increased personal effectiveness; and (p) improved interpersonal relationships. Both the weekly and the marathon growth group seem to foster similar kinds of psychological growth and change.

Many improvements in research design are essential if we are to improve our understanding of group processes. The problem of assessing outcome is a complex one, indeed, and the possibilities for generalization of results are limited. The precise causes of the observed positive changes reported here are open to

speculation; therefore, future research efforts should attempt to manipulate the independent variables of differential time-structures, group facilitators, and forms of treatment in order to isolate and determine those factors which are reliably associated with constructive personality and behavior change of group members. Also, measurements or ratings of actual out-of-group behaviors may be a more valid procedure than assessing the self-report which is a subjective criterion that may contain possible conscious or unconscious distortions. Continued observation of the postgroup behavior of group members by persons not involved in the group experience would be helpful in assessing the transfer of learning to real life situations, the long term effects of growth groups, and permanent changes in overall level of functioning. We must also begin to study individual cases within a group (rather than simply the group mean) if we are to unravel the many knots that block our understanding of the effects of group phenomena and if we are to discover individual differences that are predictive of positive outcome of group experience. My colleagues and I have collected data from 10 additional research investigations of growth groups in which we have improved upon our research designs and sought to answer additional questions. These studies are in various stages of preparation for publication and will be completed within the next year. I invite you to write to me if you would like to be on our mailing list to receive copies of our research reports as these are available.

In summary, the integrated person is organismically balanced and has the capacity to experience in awareness intellectually, emotionally, and sensorially. The goal of the experiential-Gestalt growth group experience is to foster more whole, fully integrated, real, and authentic persons who are willing to accept themselves and to take responsibility for their lives. The research findings herein reviewed suggest that this approach may effectively facilitate the self-actualization and psychological development of "normal," growth-seeking individuals.

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GESTALT DREAMWORK AS A METHOD FOR SELF-DISCOVERY

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The process of Gestalt dreamwork is one of the most important contributions of Fritz Perls, the founder of Gestalt therapy. Dreams are our most spontaneous productions, and each dream is in fact a personal work of art. Freud called the dream the "royal road to the unconscious," and Perls stated that the dream is really the "royal road to integration." The psychoanalytic approach to working with a dream is to make it an intellectual game by "talking about," theorizing, and interpreting its significance. The Gestalt approach is to understand the dream as a series of existential messages to one's self that can be received through the dramatic identification-enactment methods developed by Perls. In a dream one has a clear existential message of what is missing in his life, what he avoids doing, feeling, and living, and he has plenty of material to reassimilate and reown the alienated parts of himself. Gestalt dreamwork is an existential approach; i.e., the focus is on the total existence of a person rather than dealing simply with his symptoms.

I would like to describe to you this method for working with your own dreams or with those of your other person. It is possible for you to work with yourself with your own dreams to a limited degree as a way of assimilating new material. It is better, however, to work with a partner, for at the most crucial points you will tend to become phobic and to avoid the most threatening parts of yourself. You will run away, get bored or sleepy, etc. A partner can see this phobic attitude and help you to be aware of avoiding missing parts of your personality, and thus your dreamwork will be more productive. I repeat, though, that you can achieve considerable increased personal integration by working alone. All the missing parts of your personality will appear in your dream. Each time you involve yourself in dreamwork you will assimilate some previously alienated part of yourself. Existential messages will become clearer and clearer, and you will begin to discover and fill in the holes in your personality.

The absolutely healthy personality (if one were to exist) would be completely in touch with himself and his environment, and he would be a "whole," fully integrated person. The integrated person is one who accepts himself and has a fluid perceptual field in which figure-ground relationships become sharply differentiated and whose motor behavior is well organized and directed toward the satisfaction of particular needs. The process of gestalt formation and destruction is occurring smoothly and efficiently, and the person is aware of relevant information from within and without and makes choices that permit intelligent and appropriate behaviors that are directed toward the satisfaction of needs. This process is called organismic self-regulation. In most persons, however, this process is interfered with to some degree, and needs are not satisfactorily fulfilled. This blocking of need fulfillment results in frustration, tension, and avoidance behaviors and produces strange symptoms. Voids, holes, or blank spots appear in the personality where something should be but is missing, and the symptoms of these holes are usually indicated by avoidance. Some persons avoid seeing and have no eyes, others avoid hearing and have no ears, some have no genitals, some no self-supporting legs to stand on, others no heart, some no courage, some no emotions, etc. If I can become aware of what I avoid, what I flee from, then I have a clue as to the nature of my missing parts, the voids in my personality, and a clue to the ways in which I keep myself from becoming a more complete person and fulfilling my needs in

appropriate ways. The missing parts of my personality will appear in my dreams, and these can be reclaimed by dreamwork.

Dreamwork can also help to complete what is called "unfinished business" in Gestalt therapy. Emotions, thoughts, and memories of past events that remain unexpressed in the organism due to repression, projection, or desensitization are unfinished business. We carry the past with us only so far as we have unfinished business, and dreamwork can complete and resolve unfinished business and free energy so that the individual can further actualize his potential and mobilize his resources for a more fully functioning existence.

Gestalt dreamwork begins with the assumption that any and all parts of my dream are myself -projections of myself and fragments of my personality. All impoverishment of the personality comes about by avoidance or self-alienation or dissociation; i.e., by disowning parts of myself through the self-defeating mechanisms of repression, projection, or desensitization. I fail to develop my full potential when I am not willing to accept myself, when I do not allow myself to <u>be</u> fully myself, when I continue to play phony roles and am split and disintegrated. The dream provides an opportunity to recover my missing parts and to complete the jigsaw puzzle of my self by recovering the projected, fragmented parts of my personality and reowning my hidden potential that appears in the dream. During the process of Gestalt dreamwork, I discover (or uncover) my self, and awareness is the means of discovery.

Two basic kinds of dreams are wish fuffillment and frustration dreams (nightmares). The more split or fragmented a person is the more his dreams will be nightmarish. The well-integrated person doesn't have nightmares. He attempts to fill in the holes in his personality and to cope with unfinished situations directly and immediately during his waking hours. Recurring dreams are the most important ones to work with. When dream experiences occur repeatedly, this means that an important gestalt has not been closed. There is some unfinished business that demands completion before it can recede into the background and cease to drain off energy. When I don't remember my dreams, this may mean that I am unwilling to face my existence and that I am a phobic person who fears life. One way I can work with my unremembered dreams is to talk to my missing dreams, switch and become my missing dreams, and then engage in dialogue. Frequently memories of past dreams will then flood in and can be worked with.

Any dream that is still remembered can be worked with through the Gestalt dreamwork process. All dreams contain unfinished, unassimilated situations. If the dream is extremely long, use only a small part of the dream. First, attempt to bring the dream back to life. You can tell the dream in the past tense and then select out significant portions to relive in the present, or you can tell the entire dream in the present tense as though it were happening now. If you do the former, you may want to write the entire dream down and make a list of all the details of the dream -persons, things, emotions, etc. Then, put your whole self into the dream and act it out -psychodramatize it in the present in a way that you are really involved. <u>Be</u> in the dream as though you were experiencing a real life situation. Become each person, each thing, each emotion, etc; identify with and really transform yourself into each different item and then express what you experience. Stop your thinking machine, and come to your senses and to your body. "Pull yourself together." Ham it up, use your magic, involve yourself at the deepest level, and really <u>become</u> each item in your dream. As full identification is achieved as you play and become each part of the dream, you will begin to recognize each part as a bit of yourself, and that part will then become your own again. As reownership

occurs, you will begin to grow and to gain in maturation and self-support and in freeing your potential for constructively relating with your world.

Now have all the parts of your dream encounter each other. Switch back and forth between the parts, identifying with and <u>being</u> each item. Create a script and engage in dialogue between the different parts of the dream. Refrain from using your computer, and don't program the interactions. Really <u>feel</u> what it is like to be each part, and <u>be</u> it as fully as possible. As you do this, always look for two opposing parts, for polarities, for parts that clash, and then stay with the encounter between these two parts for a time. Remember, each part of the dream is yourself, a projection of yourself, and if you are inconsistent, contradictory, and/or conflicted, you will tap into the eternal conflict game or the self-torture game. Engage in dialogue between the two polarities, slipping back and forth, being first one side and then the other. Identify as fully as possible with each side. You will find that the two parts always start out fighting with each other, often bitterly. Let them fight and argue. Really throw yourself into the conflict! Gradually, as the process of confrontation and encounter goes on, mutual learning begins to occur as the two parts begin to really "hear" each other. Slowly an understanding is achieved and each side begins to appreciate the other. This appreciation of differences leads to centering, to a oneness, and to an integration (to some degree) of the two opposing forces. Then the civil war is completed (or reduced), and additional energies are available to be used in relating with your world. Some civil wars need several battles for the war to be completed and integration to be complete.

Each bit of dreamwork leads to additional assimilation of projected, disowned, and alienated parts of the self. Each piece of self that you recover (or uncover) is like a piece of a jigsaw puzzle that is you and, when completed, forms a more whole, completely real person. Be aware of those parts of yourself that you have pushed out of your personality and then identify with the resistance, be it fully until it is yours and overcome, and then be the previously alienated part until assimilation occurs. Enter and become what you are experiencing at each moment. Remember, the process of recovery is sometimes slow and painful.

In addition to working with polarities, listen for existential messages in your dreams. What meanings do you experience as you identify with and be each part of your dream? What kind of existence would you lead if you were each thing in your dream? Listen to yourself, to your voice (not just the words), be aware of your body language (muscular tensions, movements, body positions), and "hear" the messages your body sends to you. Tune in to yourself!! Awaken and come to your senses. Hear, see, feel, experience your needs, and <u>be real</u>! <u>Be</u> your potential and experience a richer existence with deep personal experiences. <u>Be vital and alive</u>! Relive your dream as though it were your existence and see if you can understand and experience more of yourself and your life. Again, listen closely for existential messages. Hear the message of your dream.

Frequently holes in the personality will become apparent in your dream. They appear as voids or blank spots, and when you are near these voids, you will get confused or nervous. This is the point of impasse where you avoid and become phobic and generate catastrophic fantasies. Watch for what is avoided in your dream, and then fill in the holes. Pay attention to what you are avoiding--having eyes, ears, legs, courage, etc. This is where a skilled partner is essential. He will need to skillfully frustrate you in order to keep you at your dreamwork and to encourage you to remain at the impasse point until you are able to achieve a breakthrough or to <u>explode</u> into previously unrecognized feelings. The impasse is the crucial point and it can be broken only by you if you are to grow. At these moments, you will find yourself attempting to manipulate support from your partner

at such times, but if he genuinely cares for you and/or your growth,he will refrain himself from being a "Helpful Henry," and patiently frustrate you until you discover the way out of your dilemma and achieve increased self-support and self-actualization.

The Gestalt approach to dreamwork is an existential one that seeks to promote the growth process, develop the human potential, and foster personal responsibility. The goal is more whole, fully integrated individuals who stand on their own two feet and take full responsibility for themselves and their lives. This kind of change occurs when I become what I am--not when I try (trying is lying) to become or role play what I am not. The goal is self-actualization rather than self-image-actualization; i. e., being what I am rather than living up to an image (my own or others) of what I "should" be. SElf-actualization leads to maturation or the transition from environmental support to self-support and "centeredness." The reowning of my senses and the reclaiming of my projections go hand-in-hand. I reassimilate or take back my projections by projecting myself completely into each part of my dream production. Each time I translate an "it" into an "I", I increase my vitality, enrich my existence,and actualize some new potential.

These, then, are some of the fundamental or basic principles of Gestalt dreamwork. A complete and detailed description would require a lengthy book, a task for greater than I choose to accept at this time. I would recommend that if your interest in dreamwork continues, contact the Growth Center in your area to determine if they offer Dream Workshops. (I will offer one this summer through AMARE: The Institute of Human Relatedness in Bowling Green, Ohio and another one in the fall through AMARE of Boston,) and enroll in one so that you may experience first hand this Gestalt approach to personal growth and self-discovery.

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